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Questions About National Security Strategy In The Republic Of Armenia

Landlocked between Caspian and Black Seas and surrounded by major competitor powers Russia, Turkey and Iran, Armenia, has gained considerable success since its independence. As a state Armenia meets all three of Max Weber's criteria **monopolizing the legitimate use of force within its territorial boundary and society**. It keeps the strongest armed forces in Trans Caucasus, benefits from a strategic and military partnership with Russia, and has an amazing level of political and economic support from the United States¹. Actually, Russia's military support and the Armenian-Americans' lobbying activity in the United States and Europe gives Armenia the advantage of continuing to control not only Nagorno Karabakh but also almost 20% of Azerbaijan's territory.

Yet, despite all of these accomplishments, Armenia cannot be yet recognized as a successful state. Armenia's irredentism was the main reason for its war with neighboring Azerbaijan and actually, it is difficult to imagine a set-up under which Armenia and Azerbaijan would have had good relations. The ambiguous idea, popular amongst Armenians, of a "Just Solution of the Armenian Issue" is the reason for mistrust between Armenia and Turkey, as well as source of worry to its neighboring Georgia.

Success in the war against Azerbaijan has driven the Armenian government to be very close to the position of a political prisoner of hardline nationalist forces domestically, which combined with heavy dependence on diaspora Armenians for monetary support has left the country very little space to maneuver or compromise. Domestic constraints limit Armenia's flexibility internationally, - restricting the country's ability to integrate into global and regional economic projects, and increasing dependence on military partners, since the military

¹ Roughly 90\$ million annual aid for the state of Armenia, maintenance of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, which favors Armenia over its rival Azerbaijan, and congressional support for official government recognition of the Armenian genocide of 1915-1922.

component of state power is becoming dominant. These factors may eventually disrupt Armenia's economy and exhaust its human and material resources. Therefore, from the long-term national security perspective, costs and disadvantages of this policy seem to be much more disruptive and destructive than the benefits of its short-term success.

The questions below, in terms of costs and benefits, address Armenia's and its neighbors' main security concerns, as well as opportunities for political, military, and economic development of the Republic of Armenia.

Internal costs

The main reason for the collapse of President Ter-Petrosian's government (**a former Karabakh committee leader championing earlier irredentist solution of the Karabakh problem**) was his effort to endorse the OSCE Lisbon principles, suggesting that Nagorno-Karabakh could retain effective independence, but would formally have to remain part of Azerbaijan. Not only did his opponents call him a traitor, but he also came under attack from members of his own party and of the government, particularly from its military. One of his severest critics was Prime Minister Robert Kocharian, a hardliner **and former president of the unrecognized Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh**, who later succeeded Ter-Petrosian in 1998 as President of Armenia. In a speech on national television, Ter-Petrosian characterized his resignation as "the defeat of the honorable party of peace in Armenia" and argued that differences over Nagorno-Karabakh were just a pretext that nationalist hardliner forces were using to make him resign. *What were the other reasons for President Ter-Petrosian's resignation? How strong is the hardliners' power in Armenia? How big is the share of Karabakh politicians in this power and their influence on Armenia's foreign policy? What is the diaspora's position on Nagorno-Karabakh? How does it differ from the official Yerevan's position? How crucial, in Yerevan's view, is aid from the diaspora to Armenia's survival?*

What is the diaspora's role in defining Armenia's domestic and foreign policy? Will hardliners make the current president resign if he decides to compromise with Azerbaijan? What is the Armenian scenario under which Armenia and Azerbaijan would have good or at least non-hostile relations? What compromises, do Armenians believe, is acceptable in negotiating peace with Azerbaijan?

After a terrorist attack on the parliament of Armenia where Prime Minister Sargisian, Parliamentary speaker Demirchian, and five other political leaders were killed, Yerevan made a very unusual decision. President Kocharian appointed Aram Sargisian to succeed his murdered elder brother as Prime Minister. Despite the fact that Ministry of National Security of Armenia (MNS) was responsible for the safety in the Parliament, the chief of MNS was promoted to Lieutenant General and the chief of the Counter Terrorism Department got the Medal of Honor. Nairi Huanian, the killer of the Prime Minister Vazgen Sargisian, a former secret agent of MNS, blamed president Kocharian for the death of Sargisian². Prosecutors charged three of the men with terrorism aimed at undermining authority, though the motive behind the attack remains obscure. 38-year-old Aram Sargisian had no experience and was dismissed six month later from the post of prime minister. *How has the assassination of Sargisian and Demirchian changed the balance of power in Armenia? Was the president's power strengthened? Was the terrorist act the result of a struggle of clans for power or it was the consequence of disagreement with Karabakh and Yerevan politicians? What was the main purpose of the appointment of the younger Sargisian the Prime Minister of Armenia? Does the appointment of younger Sargisian prove the existence of ruling clans in Armenia?*

²*Breach in the fortress*, in Russian, Joint project versia and Agentura. Ru, 19.08.2002.
<http://www.agentura.ru/press/about/jointprojects/versia/armenia>

The Armenian courts denied the claim of some opposition parties against the president Robert Kocharian, a former president of Karabakh, that he was an illegitimate president and candidate in current presidential elections. Armenian law requires a presidential candidate to be the Armenian citizen during the last ten years. The opposition believes Kocharian cannot be considered a citizen of Armenia and Karabakh at the same time, since Karabakh's status, according to the opposition, remains unclear and has to be negotiated between Karabakh and Azerbaijan. *What is Yerevan's position on Karabakh's status? Does Armenia officially recognize the independence of Karabakh? What is Yerevan's position on the December 1, 1989, resolution of the legislative body of Soviet Armenia about reunification of Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia? Does Yerevan violate international law and the sovereignty of Azerbaijan by recognizing candidate Kocharian a citizen of Armenia and Karabakh at the same time? Does it matter that, according to Armenian opposition, recognizing Karabakh as part of Armenia it recognizes the annexation of Karabakh by Armenia? How independent, from government and nationalist political forces, is the judicial power in Armenia?*

Tens of thousands of people demonstrated to protest falsifications in the first round of presidential elections of February 19, 2003. The opposition accuses Robert Kocharian of electoral fraud in the second round of the Armenian presidential election. Armenian President Robert Kocharian said that the protests are illegal and has threatened the use of force to stop massive opposition protests and possible disorder in the country. Opposition leaders have said a number of protesters were arrested³. *What are the differences between political platforms of Mr. Kocharian and opposition leaders? Does opposition have a different approach to the Karabakh issue? Will current government accept any possibility of sharing power with the*

³ *Armenian President Threatens to Use Force to Stop Protests*, VOA News, 22 Feb 2003
<http://www.voanews.com/>

opposition? What are the criteria under which the opposition would cooperate with current government? How far can Yerevan go in the use of force against the opposition? Does involvement of Russian forces located in Armenia in Yerevan constitute an acceptable means to stabilize the country? Does the opposition intend to unify their efforts against Mr. Kocharian?

Armenia, after a decade of statehood, suffers tremendous loss of human resources, the result of uncertainty, depression, and poverty that has settled over the population.⁴ *What is Yerevan's current judgment on the rapid population decline in Armenia? Are there any reasons other than economic for the population decreasing? Does the government have a plan to stop population decrease?*

Some Armenian scholars believe, the current political and social-economic situation has been caused by mistakes in leadership and mismanagement that deprives the country of its most intelligent and professional part of the population⁵. *What is the main obstacle to the establishment of proper leadership and personnel policies in Armenia? Is there any correlation between this problem and the hardliners' ruling position in the country? What is the government's plan to change this negative tendency?*

The war has drained Armenia's economy, and Karabakh politicians and issues seem to dominate in Yerevan's policy. Lack of investment, increasing military expenses, and population decreases affect the country's economy. According to Defense Minister Serzh Sarkisyan, Armenia's defense expenditures (\$77.5mil. – 4% of GDP) were increasing at a rate corresponding to the increase of Azerbaijan's military budget (\$114mil. - 2.6% of GDP).

Azerbaijan's economy is the most stable in the Caucasus, its population is steadily increasing,

⁴ Hugh Pope, Armenia, After a Decade of Statehood, Suffers Rapid Loss of Human Capital, Wall street Journal, July 6, 2001. <http://www.acnic.am/articles/emigration.htm>

⁵ Voice of Armenia, Interview with professor Garnik Asatryan, Gazeta SNG, February 10, 2003. <http://www.gazetasng.ru/>

and investment rate reached about \$60 billion last year.⁶ *What is Yerevan's current assessment of the state of country's economy? How do increasing military expenditures affect Armenia's economy? How big is Karabakh's share in Armenia's budget expenses? How far will the current state of Armenia's economy allow the country to go in the military race with Azerbaijan? What are the main sources of additional military financing?*

Last year Yerevan cleared tens of millions of US dollars of debt to Moscow by handing five major Armenian enterprises to Russian ownership. For the same reason, the Russian and Armenian governments have said they will sign an agreement giving Moscow financial control of Armenia's nuclear power station, Metsamor, by the end of February.⁷ *What determines Yerevan's economic policy; the country's inability to pay Russians for increased military aid or the government's desire to fully involve Russia in Armenian issue? What is Yerevan's current judgment about losing not only energy independence, but also economic freedom? The new agreement is likely to cause problems with the European Union, which has been pushing for Metsamor to be closed. Does it matter that Armenia and the EU signed a provisional agreement to have the station shut down in 2004?*

External costs

External support for movements for self-determination or separation widened conflicts in Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Chechnya. In addition, attempts at economic strangulation have further pressured political leaders in the Caucasian countries to abandon the development of independent policies. *What key regional powers does Yerevan believe play a role in region? What is Armenia's understanding of competitors' interests, objectives, and means? What is*

6 Public Television of Armenia, Armenian defense budget to go up 5 per cent in 2003, Via BBC Monitoring Service, Yerevan, 13 November 2002. <http://perso.club-internet.fr/kozlowsk/armenia.html>

The World Factbook, *Armenia*, CIA, 2002. <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/am.html>

⁷ Peter Magdashian, Russia takes over Armenian nuclear plant, IWPR, 14.02.2003
<http://eng.gazetasng.ru/article.php?id=10322>

Yerevan's judgment of the United States' interests and role in the Caucasus? How, from Yerevan's point of view, do U.S. interests agree with Armenia's strategic partner Russia's interests? What are the main points of disagreement between Russia and the U.S. on the Caucasus that concern Armenia? What common points, if any, exist for development? What opportunities does Russia have to fully promote its interests in the Caucasus and Caspian?

Armenia is one of the active members of CIS Collective Security Pact, and actively participates in a unified air defense system. In addition, Yerevan is building a strategic military partnership on a bilateral basis with Moscow, has signed a twenty-five year military basing agreement with Russia, and has ceded control of Armenia's borders to Russian forces.⁸ *What political and military obligations do the new regulations of the Collective Security Pact impose on Armenia? What advantages does this pact provide in terms of Armenia's national security? What are the main threats, according to Armenia's military doctrine, which have to be addressed by collective military forces? Who actually controls Armenian borders? Can Armenia control its own borders independently? How does Armenia evaluate the present stage and prospective development of Armenian-Russian cooperation? What is the role of the Russian military base located in Armenia?*

In 2000, Armenian foreign minister Vardan Oskanian stated that the Russian military base located in Armenia is there to prevent danger from a "third side", and to guarantee stability.⁹ *What has changed since that time in terms of Russian military role in Armenia? Do Yerevan and Moscow have the same objectives and criteria of stability? What country or military threat did he mean as the "third side"? If Turkey is the threat, what is the Armenian*

⁸ Decision Brief, Caspian Watch #4: *House-Senate Conference Must Strike Proper Balance For American Interests*, p. 2, The center for security policy, September 17, 1996.
<http://www.security-policy.org/papers/1996/96-D85.html>

⁹ Justin Burke, *USA trying to break up Armenian-Russian military relations, general says*, Armenia Daily Digest, Yerevan, May 18, 2000. <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/armenia/hypermail/200005/0040.html>

variant of a scenario under which Armenia and Turkey could have had good relations?¹⁰ What is the difference between Yerevan and the Diaspora's positions on the Turkish-Armenian issue?

The United States and Armenia have announced their decision to develop closer military ties – another manifestation of Washington's growing involvement in the South Caucasus. The Defense Minister Sarkisian's four-day official visit to Washington in mid-March 2002, when an agreement with U.S. military had been reached, raised worries in Moscow.¹¹ *Does it signify Yerevan's decision to expend its circle of strategic partners? Does this decision result from Yerevan's assumption that Russia is losing ground to the west in the struggle for regional influence? How will a decrease of Russia's role in Caucasus impact on Armenia's national security? In light of recent geopolitical changes in the region, what else does Yerevan believe to be a "complement"¹² to its military alliance with Russia? Does President Sarkisian's four-day official visit to the U.S. signify Yerevan's determination to neutralize heavy dependence on Russia in terms of national security? Has Moscow sought for further guarantees from Yerevan to conform to the old strategic line? Does any considerable political party in Armenia plan to push to apply for membership in NATO?*

¹⁰ Actually, Turkish-Armenian relations remain to be very close to hostile. Their historical rivalry, Armenian diaspora's anti-Turkish activity in the U.S and Europe and Armenia's blockade by Turks in 1991, has left little chance for the improvement of their relations.

Facts and Comments on Armenian Matters, Office of the Prime Minister of Turkey, Ankara, 2002.

http://www.byegm.gov.tr/YAYINLARIMIZ/newspot/2002/jan_feb/n20.htm

http://www.deutsch-armenische-gesellschaft.de/dag/tagmmi-azg_2001033103.shtml

<http://www.anca.org/anca/pospapers.asp>

¹¹ Igor Tabakov, *Russia Struggles To Counterbalance Rising U.S. Influence In The Caucasus*, Eurazianet, 04.08.2002. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav040802.shtml>

¹² Vartan Oskanian, Foreign Minister of Armenia, *The Foreign Policy of Armenia*, CSIS, Corporate Briefing Series, June 29, 1999. <http://www.csis.org/ruseura/cs990629Oskanian.html>

Just two weeks before Sarkisian's departure for Washington, Armenia and Iran announced the start of their bilateral military cooperation.¹³ *What concrete forms might the Armenian-Iranian defense ties take? Is this cooperation a result of development of Russian-Armenian strategic cooperation or it is an independent part of Armenian military strategy? How will Yerevan's military cooperation with Iran, a country that Washington regards as anything but a friend and which risks becoming another target of the U.S antiterrorism campaign, impact on U.S-Armenia relations? How does Yerevan plan to prevent transshipment of military hardware and possibly nuclear and other proscribed materials from Russia to Iran?*

Armenia considers Georgia's military ties with Turkey a threat to its national security. Tbilisi, in turn, feels threatened by Yerevan's military ties with Moscow. The two Caucasus neighbors, whose foreign policy priorities have differed over the past ten Years, concluded a comprehensive agreement on "friendship, cooperation, and mutual security" at a summit on 23 October, 2001 in Yerevan. Armenia and Georgia have offered each other assurances that the countries' often-conflicting security interests will not hurt bilateral ties. The Armenian and Georgian presidents declared that the treaty puts their military links with Russia and Turkey in a strictly bilateral framework, which prevents any threat to Tbilisi and Yerevan. *What changes determined Armenia's decision to sign such an agreement with Georgia? What role did U.S.-Georgian and U.S.-Armenian relations play in reaching this agreement? How successful was this document in dispelling mistrust between Georgia and Armenia? What is Armenia's current judgment of the level of confidence between these two countries? What practical steps*

¹³ Emil Danielyan, Armenia: Yerevan Courts Unlikely New Security Partners -- The U.S. And Iran, Radio Free Europe, Yerevan, 29 March 2002
<http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2002/03/29032002101905.asp>

has Armenia undertaken to strengthen mutual confidence? What does Yerevan think Georgia should do to achieve the same purpose?

Kocharian and Shevardnadze offered assurances that they will not allow ties with other countries to spoil what they described as a "fraternal" relationship between their countries. Many politicians in Georgia believe the continued Russian military presence in Georgia gives Russia additional leverage against Tbilisi, destabilizes Georgia and limits government's abilities to control the country. Tbilisi is pushing for the closure of all Russian military bases in Georgia, but Yerevan views its own Russian presence as a key element of its national security doctrine, arguing that the main reason for their reliance on Russia is the perceived threat from Armenia's traditional enemy, Turkey. Therefore, a few politicians in Armenia believe the Russian troops withdrawal from Georgia will strengthen the Turkish presence in Caucasus and consequently affect Armenia's national interests. *What is Yerevan's position on this issue? How strong is Armenia's assumption that Tbilisi's determination to reach Russian troop withdrawal from Georgia is against Armenia's vital national interest? What is the plan of the Armenian government for resolving this problem? How does Yerevan plan to convince Georgia to refrain from doing so? What means of persuasion does Armenia possess to convince Russia to change its attitude toward Georgia? How is Armenia going to assure its national interests in case of Russian troops withdrawal from Georgia? How will Georgian-Armenian relations change with Georgia's seeking membership of NATO?*

The war between Azerbaijan and Armenia constrains Armenian participation in the Baku Tbilisi Ceyhan pipeline project. *What is Yerevan's position on this development? Is this project against Armenia's national interests, since it makes Azerbaijan stronger?*

Another potentially destabilizing factor in bilateral relations between Armenia and Georgia is the periodic tension in Georgia's Javakhetia region, which is mainly populated by

Armenians.¹⁴ Armenian President Robert Kocharian said the Armenian minority in Georgia should serve as a "bridge of friendship" between the two nations, rather than divide them. Still, severe economic hardship in the region has motivated calls for greater autonomy from the Georgian government and the Georgian population considers this the first step in the direction of Javakhetia's separation from Georgia. The local population in Javakhetia also opposes the Georgian leadership's determination to force Russian troop withdrawal from a military base there, since the Armenian population considers Russian presence in this region a guarantee of their own security and economic stability. *What is the Yerevan's Judgment of Armenian population's main security concerns in Javakhetia? How critical is Yerevan's approval of the degree of autonomy granted in this region? If Russian troops withdraw, what does Yerevan believe Georgia should do to assure the Armenians' security in this region?*

International responsibilities obligate Georgia to repatriate Meskhetian Turks in the Javakhetia region that opposes the Armenian population in this region, due to their historical rivalry.¹⁵ *What is the Yerevan's position on this issue? What is Armenian alternative of Tbilisi's approach to this problem?*

¹⁴ Robert M. Culter, *Javakhetia: Flashpoint or Bottleneck?* Personal web page, p. 1.
<http://www.robertcutler.org/consult/topical/ge9912jv.htm>

¹⁵ Robert M. Culter, p. 2.

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